

What needs to change in the classroom for students with significant disabilities?

What we would like to see <i>less of:</i>	What we would like to see <i>more of:</i>
<p>Negative attitudes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Labeling of students, looking solely at disability• Deficit thinking• Making assumptions based on codes or diagnostic labels• Working from the assumption that these students can't learn so why bother• Fear• Teacher resistance to having students with disabilities in their grade-level classroom	<p>Positive attitudes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open conversations• Understanding and acceptance• Presumed competence• Adults believing all students can learn and participate• Outside-of-the-box thinking• Respect and importance of dignity• Strength-based thinking (focusing on what students can do)• Solution-focused• Collaborative approach• Staff excited about teaching all students• Teachers taking a genuine interest in these students and treating them as if they matter• Staff excited to have resources and material for instruction• Teachers feeling empowered to support these students• Collective responsibility for all students• Staff that are excited about teaching all students• Looking at each student's capabilities (rather than limitations)• Sense of joy• Sense of fun• Willingness to dive in and start somewhere!

<i>Less</i>	<i>More</i>
<p>Isolated learning experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-size-fits-all approach to instruction • Pull-out and segregation • Students with significant challenges being moved into segregated sites with less focus on literacy • Isolating students in closed-door classrooms • Isolating from peers • Students sitting and doing nothing 	<p>Connected to the school community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming offered in the neighbourhood or community school (versus in specialized settings only) • Opportunities for cooperative learning/group learning/social learning • Small group work and peer support
<p>Over-reliance on one-to-one adult support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational assistants sitting by (or at the back of the room with) an individual student • Educational assistants being solely responsible for programming • One-to-one support only • Adults doing for, not with—fostering of dependence • Adults speaking for individual students • Interaction with adults only • Focus on memorization and content only • Passive learning 	<p>Use of natural supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time with peers • Positive and two-way interaction with other students in the school • Peer mentoring • Opportunities to increase independence across all areas • Appropriate and creative use of technology • Assistive technology infused into instruction and making it available to everyone so no one feels badly or looks different for using it • Maximizing on student areas of interest as a way to support learning • Use of multi-sensory and multi-media platforms • Visuals supports
<p>Sterile physical environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional-like classroom spaces 	<p>Beautiful spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich stimulating learning environments

<i>Less ...</i>	<i>More ...</i>
<p>Rote tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work that is not age respectful, • Boring activities that serve more as “babysitting” • Random activities not connected to the program of studies • “Dumbing down” the curriculum • Baby books being read to 12 year olds because “that is where they’re at” or giving grade one materials to a grade eight student with a significant disability • Worksheets and paper-and-pencil tasks that have limited meaning • Puzzles • Colouring • Sitting and doing nothing 	<p>Engaging learning activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students in class participating and engaged • Active engagement that inspires learners to do their best • Meaningful classroom experiences • Multiple literacy and numeracy opportunities • Meaningful routines and activities that are individualized as required • Using technology and engaging learning activities to ensure access and build skills • Work experience opportunities in the community
<p>Limited instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching to only one or two students in the group 	<p>Robust and engaging instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful learning in the classroom • Goals and instruction connected to curriculum • Students participating in the curriculum at their ability level • Learning opportunities on grade-level concepts, supported by resources and activities that match individual needs and abilities • Explicit instruction of expectations • Meaningful and repeated instruction of necessary skills (e.g., routines and problem-solving) at their level in a way that makes sense to them • Focus on independence in programming • Ideas for to programing for these students in the grade-level classroom, especially in junior and senior high

	<p>Robust and engaging instruction <i>continued</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy instruction • UDL practices that support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --multiple means of action and expression --multiple means of representation --multiple means of engagement • Flexible and meaningful assessment that directs learning • Vocabulary building • Music, dance, fine motor, fun • Scheduled time for “Mind up” and calming strategies • Assessment for learning, as learning
<p>Narrow focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing only on daily living routines or “life and work” skills 	<p>Focus on communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing communication skills • ACC support for students with communication challenges • Augmented communication for every student with complex communication needs • Aided language stimulation
<p>Limited resources</p>	<p>Available resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers having time and support to plan in teams to provide appropriate programming and instruction for all students in their classroom • Professional development and training for teachers and educational assistants • High interest reading resources • More communication devices and opportunities to use them

<i>Less ...</i>	<i>More ...</i>
<p>Limited collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher versus parents 	<p>Collaboration and team work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing collaboration and sharing, and planning between home and school • Collaboration between staff • Co-teaching practices • Trans-disciplinary approach (e.g., SLP, OT, reading specialist, AT consultant) • Parent support AND support for parents
	<p>Student experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students involved in both educational and social activities • All students in all classes participating and engaged for majority of day • All students engaging in fun, literacy activities • Students feeling good about themselves and excited to learn • Building on students' strengths • Fostering sense of purpose • Challenging of students • Students who understand themselves as learners and have freedom to act on this self-knowledge